Tim Callery Wednesday, March 28, 2012

Humanities 6C Periods 8 + 9

**Civilization’s Morals and Abilities:**

**The Message of Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH**

The book; Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH has a message that will stay in the reader, however tiny, smart, huge, or old they are. Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH was written by Robert C. O’Brien. I believe that the message of Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH was to make, and sustain a civilization, you must be intelligent, responsible, and able to do the right thing. These are the elements of a civilization: intelligence, responsibility, and righteousness. This message will be proved with strong, supporting text details.

To make and sustain a civilization you must be intelligent. At one point in the book, the rats come to move Mrs. Frisby’s house to the “lee of the stone.” The rats moved Mrs. Frisby and her children’s house, because of the promise that they made. The rats made a promise with Mrs. Frisby at their sub-rosa world when they learned that she needed help, and that she was the widow of Jonathan Frisby, a friend of the rats’. They felt that they could partially be responsible for her problems. Before the rats moved Mrs. Frisby’s house, they saved her from the clutches of the cage that she was trapped in in the Fitzgibbon’s house. Justin was the one who saved her. During the moving process the rats used efficient tools and specialization of labor to move her house. They had pulleys, wheeled cart platforms, shovels, and scaffolding. Only intelligent, smart, and resourceful beings could come up with and use tools like these. Then, they each had separate jobs that they were strongest and efficient in. If you know that quote that people always say: “Work to your strengths.” That quote has a lot to do with civilization. To have a working civilization, you must have specialized jobs, and only intelligent beings are capable of specializing in jobs. After the house was moved, Mrs. Frisby and her children were safe from the plow until summer. When the plow came through, they were safe, and they eventually moved to their summer home.

The rats also built and made a fabulous cave-home underground. The cave had arches, hallways, main rooms, corridors, doors, elevators, and electric lights and machines. The rats were able to build all of this architecture and utilities and machines from their capabilities. Only intelligent beings could have such architecture and utilities. This shows that the rats were intelligent, and knew how to do things efficiently, like a civilization.

To make and sustain a civilization you must be responsible. At one point in the book, the rats know that they will have to abandon their world, because of the NIMH exterminator that’s coming to gas-out their home, so a few know that they must stay behind to hold-off and distract the exterminators so that the others can be safe. They decide to evacuate everybody and the food supply to Thorn Valley, and keep a rear guard of rats, and a stolen pile of garbage, in the hole, because they figured out that the exterminators are probably from NIMH, coming to catch the other rats from the original escaped party [Nicodemus, Brutus, Justin, etc.]. They have the evidence that Mrs. Frisby figured out about the exterminators and Jenner’s dead party of rats.

Ten rats, including Justin, Brutus, and Nicodemus, were the ones who stayed behind on the morning after the meeting in the cave the day before. During the battle against the exterminators, the exterminators gassed the cave out, but three rats got caught inside. The rest of the rats escaped out into the woods, and came in and out, making the exterminators think that there was more than seven. One rat escaped out of the trapped three, but one rat, who we don’t know, sacrificed his life to save the other two, but he only saved one, killing himself in the process. The rats stayed behind allowing the other rats to quickly escape to Thorn Valley, where they were going to start their civilization. After they left, the rats started their civilization at Thorn Valley. It shows that the rats were responsible for important events that would shape their lives and new civilization totally, which enables them to make a civilization, because they can take responsibility for their problems and actions.

To make and sustain a civilization you must be able to do the right thing, or be righteous. In the book, the rats make a plan: called the Plan of the Rats of NIMH, to make their own, self-sufficient civilization in Thorn Valley, instead of living off of luxuries that they understand very well, but that are stolen. They know that a civilization that lives off of stealing isn’t a civilization, but merely one that is living on the edge of another.

Their plan started when they destroyed their machines and luxuries in their cave home. Then, they started to stockpile food and seeds along with agricultural technology to start and agricultural system once they left their cave for Thorn Valley. They had enough food for two harvests, just-in-case one went wrong. They started this plan once Nicodemus knew that stealing and making a fake civilization wasn’t the right thing to do. Once the cave was in danger of the NIMH exterminator who was coming back, the rats put their plan into action. The main population of rats left, and once the rear guard had fought its battle, they were all in Thorn Valley.

The plan was the right thing to do, because a civilization must start from scratch, not live off of another one. That is why many people hated rats, because of their stealing-based lifestyle and civilizations. Nicodemus knew this from his stay at the Boniface Estate. A civilization MUST be able to do the right thing, otherwise, it all goes to shame and is hated by others. Jenner and Nicodemus both had a heated argument about the morality of stealing in the book. Jenner disagrees with Nicodemus about moving to Thorn Valley, because Jenner wants to stay in the cave, near the barn, where they can get electricity, and food that they can steal. Jenner is being like the prairie dogs, wanting to keep on the EASY path. He thinks that they’re SO smart now, that they can do anything, and they can avoid anything. Nicodemus disagrees with Jenner because he believes that they have to work hard to make their rat civilization, instead of “…living on the edge of somebody else’s…” like fleas on a dog. “If the dog drowns, the fleas drown too.” Jenner and his followers left because of when Nicodemus, and his followers and supporters destroyed the machines that made their lives easy.

This can be shown through history too! Just like the pirates and the barbarians. They stole to make their lives, and everybody hated them. This can also be seen from the fall of Rome in about 100 A.D. This can be seen form the fall of Rome, because Roman greed for power, money, and land, made their empire HUGE, and sometimes not able to sustain itself. All of the greed led to it becoming weak, and too hard to handle. This was how the rats’ civilization would’ve ended up if they had kept their life of stealing and luxury. When the Roman relied on barbarians to guard their growing borders, their civilization became crawling with barbarians, and the grips of the barbarian threat were tightened. This eventually led to a Roman breakdown. They obviously didn’t do the right thing, which leads to civilization.

The book: Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH has a very strong lesson about life in it. Robert C. O’Brien made his book, so that the message stood out to the reader. This lesson will stay with me, because of its strength and reality. To make a civilization, or a good representation, you must be responsible, intelligent, and righteous. The main message could also be do the right thing, and others will think highly of you. A civilization must be based on doing the right thing.